

## Weatherization Makes a Big Impact in Texas

Texas spans a vast tract of land and encompasses a diverse range of climate zones. The state is vulnerable to hurricanes, tornados, heat waves, floods, and ice storms. These varied weather conditions have a significant impact on the state's energy consumption and require diverse approaches that are responsive to each zone and to the needs of the residents. Changes in energy markets and weather hit low-income Texans the hardest. To address the energy needs of low-income families, Texas partners with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to deliver the Weatherization Assistance Program (Weatherization). Weatherization reduces energy costs for low-income households by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes, while ensuring their health and safety.

Nearly 17% of Texas' population falls below the poverty line. These low-income households typically spend 14% of their total annual income on energy, compared with 3.5% for other households. Rising energy prices compound this burden. Low-income families often have to cut back on other necessities to pay their energy bills. Weatherization reduces home energy consumption, which provides a permanent boost to the household's budget.

Theresa Hill\*, a senior citizen from Berger, called her local agency for help with her drafty home. After her home was weatherized, Theresa noted, "...I can tell a big difference when the Panhandle winds blow. I know my house will be much warmer this winter. I also know my heating costs will be lower. The savings mean a lot to me."

Texas' Department of Housing and Community Affairs administers the Weatherization Program and a network of 36 local agencies delivers energy efficiency services to all 254 counties in the state. Professionally trained crews use a computerized energy audit and advanced diagnostic equipment, such as the blower door, to determine the most cost-effective energy efficiency measures appropriate for each home.

### NATIONAL WEATHERIZATION PROGRAM

Homes weatherized in 1999	68,000
DOE allocations in 1999	\$135 million
Average annual energy cost savings per household	\$300
Average space heating savings	25-30%
Energy benefits returned for every \$1 invested	\$2.10
Jobs supported	7,000

### TEXAS

Homes weatherized in 1999 (with DOE \$)	1,295
DOE funding in 1999	\$3.2 million
Clients served in 1999	5,499
Elderly	28%
People with disabilities	20%
Families with children	24%

Texas crews also test space heaters and cooking appliances for carbon monoxide, a colorless, odorless gas that can be deadly in large quantities.

Typical weatherization services include installing insulation and mitigating heat loss through windows, doors, and other infiltration points. Clients are also educated on the proper use and maintenance of the installed measures.

## FRIENDS BOOST RESULTS

The name “Texas” derives from an Indian word meaning friends or allies. The spirit of friendship lives on in Texas’ Weatherization Program. Texas relies on creative partnerships and leveraging strategies to expand Weatherization Program capabilities. In 1999, Texas used oil overcharge funds to weatherize an additional 2,496 homes. Texas also secured \$3.2 million in utility commitments to weatherize more low-income homes and deliver additional services while in the homes.

Weatherization works with other community organizations to deliver expanded services. The Travis County Weatherization Program works with the Cerebral Palsy Association to install wheelchair ramps and make other accessibility improvements for people with disabilities. The weatherization crew uses leveraged funds to deliver these additional services in tandem with weatherization measures.

## BEATING THE HEAT

Texans have a multi-faceted culture, but one image strikes an immediate connection: the ten-gallon hat. These distinctive hats provide protection from the elements as well as an important sense of identity. One popular hat maker modified his product with lighter materials and better ventilation to enable Texans to continue wearing their favorite hats even in the summertime.

For low-income Texans, beating the heat can pose a much more serious challenge. Low-income families often suffer with inadequate cooling and ventilation equipment. Some rely on a single fan to drive out the oppressive heat. Weatherization prioritizes services to the elderly, people with disabilities, and families with children. These low-income

households are at the highest risk of heat-related health problems. Typical weatherization measures improve the energy efficiency of the home, which makes it easier to heat and cool.

Harold Howser\*, a recipient of weatherization services in Abilene, commented, “Thanks to all of you good people

helping me and my family, it is nice and warm when it is cold outside and nice and cool when it is hot outside. Also, I cut my [energy] bills in half.”



*Texas uses the blower door to identify and mitigate air infiltration.*

During a severe summer heat wave in 2000, Weatherization agencies helped to distribute emergency heat relief funds. Texas partnered with DOE and the U.S. Department of Health and Human services to purchase high efficiency air conditioners and deliver

the units to eligible low-income households. For many Texans, this service made a life-or-death difference.

## WEATHERIZATION WORKS!

Weatherization produces an impressive range of benefits for low-income households and communities in Texas. Weatherization saves energy and money for low-income families. Nationally, for every \$1 invested in the program, Weatherization returns \$2.10 in energy-related benefits. Weatherization stimulates the local economy by reducing energy expenditures and keeping more money in the community. Weatherization measures reduce national energy demand and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Weatherization works for Texas and America!

*\*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the subjects.*



## TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, CONTACT:

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Visit the Weatherization Web site at: [www.eren.doe.gov/buildings/weatherization\\_assistance](http://www.eren.doe.gov/buildings/weatherization_assistance)  
or call the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Clearinghouse at: 1-800-DOE-3732



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